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OPEDA

Organization of Professional Employees of the U. S. Department of Agriculture

Administration Bldg., Washington, D. C.

CURRENT SERIAL RECORD

NOVEMBER, 1948

DEC - 5 1949

1 of 2 Cordial Greetings to All the Members of Our Growing Family

This is election month. We have had one, according to the press and radio, though many of us in D. C. could take no part in it. Now we are to have another, and again some members will be unable to vote. And that is bad again. But according to our OPEDA Constitution the only voting done by the members at large is for Council members, and only those bureaus or agencies that have at least 10 members are eligible to have representation on the Council. Unfortunately a few of the Department units still have fewer than 10 members each. This determination is made by the Executive Committee each year for the succeeding year on the basis of membership on October 1.

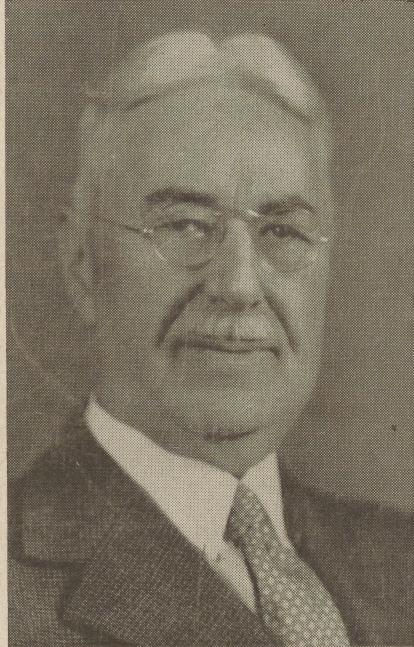
Now that we are printing these letters and in a format resembling a periodical, the Executive Committee has approved making it one in fact. Its name will be OPEDA and it will be issued four times a year—after each of the three Council meetings and also when Congress adjourns each year. It is deemed advisable to start Volume 1 with 1949, and No. 1 will be issued after the January meeting of the Council.

A tentative idea of your officers about the new periodical is to include in it more than the Kneipp and officers' letters; open it up as space permits to notes, comments, and letters from members and news items about them in their relations, views, and activities concerning OPEDA and its work or functions. Let us know what you think of the idea.

Usually the summer time has been fairly quiet in OPEDA's office; not so this year. With Congress in session late and reconvening in special session, and because of the interest of old and new members in OPEDA and the activity of committees there has been a lot of work to do. So the Executive Committee extended the employment of the Executive Officer through July and August. Then during September, although he was not paid for that month, he continued to come to the office about as usual because of his interest in the organization and the work he is doing. Mrs. Agnes Meier, who has been with OPEDA for 3 years, and Miss Kraus part of the summer and Mrs. Mohr recently, have helped to carry on the work and keep it strictly up to date in all respects. We are proud to report that OPEDA has a very competent and efficient staff in its office.

The employment of an Executive

Officer to manage the office, handle the correspondence, work with committees, meet with special groups as desired, and represent OPEDA before congressional committees, the Civil Service Commission, Department agencies or other groups in relation to the objectives of our organization has proved to be a wise and successful action. And we believe that the outstanding reason for this success is the fortunate selection of Lee Kneipp



OPEDA's EXECUTIVE OFFICER
L. F. KNEIPP

for that position and his willingness to serve, which he has so ably done with so much personal interest and enthusiasm.

So the members of OPEDA may recognize him when they see him, we and the Executive Committee deem it advisable to include a photograph of Mr. Kneipp over his protest. And here it is on this page. But Lee has repeatedly emphasized that to achieve its full measure of success and attain its goals OPEDA must not unduly exalt its Executive Officer but must get whole-hearted support and enthusiasm from its members and active work by its committees.

As so many new members have come into OPEDA since we introduced Mr. Kneipp in our letter of February

20 of this year, it seems appropriate at this time to let them know a little of his background. He was Assistant Chief of the Forest Service for 38 years until his retirement at the end of 1946 when he was still some years shy of 70. In his official work Lee appeared before congressional committees numerous times and became personally acquainted with a great many members of Congress. We are indeed happy and lucky to have him with us.

Some uncertainty has prevailed as to just how much dues should be paid by new members coming in at different times of the year. At its meeting October 28 the Council voted that the amount should be \$2 for those entering during the first and second quarters; from those taking out memberships the third quarter \$3 will be accepted in full payment for the current and the ensuing year; and for those coming in the last quarter the payment of \$2 will be credited to the following year. This definiteness will help.

How do you like the plan of issuing membership cards instead of receipts on payment of dues? The Executive Committee is sold on them, for it has approved their issuance for 1949. That is only one of several innovations suggested this year by the Executive Officer.

On August 5 the OPEDA staff received word that all the north part of the fifth floor of the Administration Building where their office was located was to undergo structural changes. Happily it was found that by some shifting of furniture all of OPEDA's equipment, including desks and chairs for the three staff members, could be moved into Merrill's office where all four could work without too great inconvenience. This was done, and there OPEDA stayed till November 1 when it was moved back to its previous space under new fluorescent lights. Better plan to drop in and see your staff and get acquainted. This applies to field members when here as well as to those working in the Washington area. OPEDA's phone number is 5591.

Well, we are sorry to report that OPEDA did not quite reach its 1948 goal of 3,000 members. But by October 1 the membership was 2,534, a gain of 1,099 over the number for 1947. Last year's gain over 1946 was 196. So we are on our way, but there is a long distance ahead yet. In-

cluded in this issue is a table showing the membership by bureaus and also the number in each eligible to become members. That gives you an accurate measure of the distance here mentioned.

Financially your organization continues sound. On October 1 the balance in its treasury was \$2,634.67.

The Council has met the three times this year as provided by the Constitu-

tion, and the Executive Committee thus far has met five times and took action over the telephone twice when the members were called individually to get their votes on pending matters. Many matters of importance to the organization have been and are being considered by your various committees for decision by the Council. The coming January meeting will rank high in this respect. One of the decisions to be made then will be as to a change in the Constitution to pro-

vide some expansion of eligibility to membership. The convening of a new Congress in January will mean a lot of activity for OPEDA, and here we will let Lee take over.

Cordially yours,
M. C. MERRILL,
President,
GEORGE A. COLLIER,
Vice President,
WALWORTH BROWN,
Secretary-Treasurer.

Executive Officer's Report—November 1948

Kneipp Letter No. 4

• **A NEW CONGRESS IS BORN:** The recent election made no change in the Presidency, but will markedly change the composition and organization of both houses of Congress. All committees will have new chairmen and numerous new majority members. Changes in staffs of committees are strongly probable. Many seats in Senate and House will be occupied by persons not previously conversant with Federal programs and personnel. It will be unusual if some of the new members are not exceedingly skeptical as to the character, quality, and competence of Federal employees or the essentiality and value of their services. Federal employees should do their full part in dispelling such skepticism. Equally should they do their part in creating understanding of their problems and their needs; of the adjustments in their status and working conditions which are dictated by equity and reason. To those ends OPEDA proposes to direct its efforts during 1949.

• **THE USDA PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEE:** To feed and clothe the nation, and partially to feed and clothe the world, one-fifth of the American people engage in one form or phase of agriculture or another. To serve them the Federal Department of Agriculture was created. To redeem its obligations that Department over the years has developed a personnel versed and skilled in the natural sciences, in the economic relationships and consequences of agriculture, in the complex forms of association and organization requisite to the production, processing, and distribution of organic resources without which desirable levels of human existence and culture could not exist.

To qualify themselves for this vital service, many thousands of the men and women who comprise the Department personnel have devoted the formative years of their lives to the acquisition of technical or scientific knowledge, later to be tested and refined in the hard schools of experience or of trial and error, or to the development of intricate patterns of practice and procedure without which the modern economic association could not operate. Thus, these men and

women have evolved, conform to, and practice certain principles and procedures of technique, science, arts, and ethics which in combination constitute definite professions.

To these men and women their professions, in most instances, are means of livelihood, but also they are ways of life, careers, philosophies, media of unselfish service to their people and their nation. Equitable monetary rewards for service are important but so, too, are many other elements such as working conditions and facilities most favorable to maximum accomplishment and progress, opportunity, recognition, advancement, latitude, prestige. In a material and highly competitive world some few attain all of these ends through kindly circumstance rather than conscious effort, but only infrequently; in the main they are the fruits only of the individual's aggressive and persistent presentation of his or her equitable claims to consideration and recognition. But against successful individual action the odds are high. Only as individuals combine their strength and numbers and merge their interests in some common purpose can they command the understanding and support of popular opinion—the one influence that can prevail over selfishness, prejudice, precedent, and inertia. Nothing supports that premise more clearly than the history of Federal employment.

As recently as the beginning of this century, Federal employment was characterized by many adverse conditions; low pay, economic insecurity, deficient working facilities, variable standards, favoritism—to mention only some of them. These deplorable conditions were not corrected by spontaneous public action. On the contrary, they were corrected only through the concerted and long sustained efforts of minor groups of Federal employees, who joined together to picture conditions that were inefficient and unjust and to press for their correction. These people gave liberally of their own time and means, not alone for their own personal advantage but also to benefit the entire Federal service. The relatively liberal and secure conditions of employment which now prevail in the Federal service are directly

attributable to those earlier efforts, of which every person now under Federal appointment is a beneficiary.

But goals once attained thereafter must be maintained; without vigilant safeguards there is no guarantee that they will not thereafter be lost. Then, as time goes on, aspirations to new and more desirable goals become not only proper but imperative if progress is to prevail. To no group of employees in the Federal service should these facts be more evident than to the professional employees of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. To them professional work such as that of the Department is their chosen career; through such work they may most fully realize all of their hopes and concepts of rich and constructive life and service. Self-interest dictates their resort to all reasonable and ethical means to establish and maintain a climate of employment in which they can achieve the most, contribute the most, derive the most from their talents and aspirations.

The professional employees have much in common with the employees whose services are in the non-professional categories, but also they have many responsibilities and interests which the non-professional employees do not share. It is that circumstance that makes it impracticable, if not wholly impossible, for the professional employees exclusively to rely for the presentation of their needs and views upon membership in the Federal employee unions not professional in character and purpose. In these unions professional people probably would be no more than small minorities, particularly where the majority interest differed from their own. If the needs and views of the professional employees are to be presented fully and effectively to the Congress, the Civil Service Commission, and the Executive establishment, a type of employee organization particularly designed and maintained for that purpose is necessary.

Precise differentiation between the professional and non-professional categories of employees in the Department of Agriculture obviously is difficult. There is no intent to question or disparage the importance and essentiality of the activities not regarded as professional. But in its common usage the term "professional" connotes certain minimum standards or limits of experience, training, and discipline in specialized fields of technique, science, or administration. The logical point of differentiation is that at which such

Total USDA membership in grades eligible for OPEDA membership as of
June 30, 1948

Agency	Total P-1 to P-8	Total SP-6 to SP-8	Total CAF-7 to CAF-15	Grand Total	No. now OPEDA members
Off. Sec'y	26	—	213	239	8
BAE.	445	1	44	490	209
LIB.	81	3	7	91	25
RES. & MKTG.	4	—	5	9	—
FAR.	73	1	15	90	11
INFO.	37	3	56	96	32
SOL.	213	—	17	230	—
EXT. SERV.	76	2	18	96	45
ADM-ARA.	19	1	7	27	6
ARC.	5	2	12	19	—
AIC.	689	74	39	802	100
BAI.	1,843	23	294	2,160	197
BDI.	74	4	11	89	18
E. & PQ.	1,337	216	76	1,629	471
HN. & HE.	113	3	4	120	3
PISAE.	846	116	52	1,014	124
OES.	20	—	7	27	19
CEA.	16	—	32	48	16
FCA.	96	1	190	287	4
FHA.	2,161	—	453	2,614	6
FCIC.	17	—	164	181	2
FS.	2,689	1,382	375	4,446	337
PMA.	528	28	3,717	4,273	169
REA.	245	3	327	575	21
SCS.	5,076	32	249	5,357	683
	16,729	1,895	6,385	25,009	2,506 ¹

¹ Not including members retired or transferred to other departments.

minimum standards or limits first appear in the job class standards prescribed by the Civil Service Commission pursuant to the Classification Act. After careful and prolonged consideration by the officers, committees, and Council of OPEDA, the conclusion was reached that Grades P-1, SP-6, and CAF-7 were, in most cases, the lowest in which such professional standards or limits were definitely established either as direct or as educational equivalent requirements; consequently they were adopted as the minimum limits of eligibility for membership in OPEDA.

Three-sevenths of the appointed employees of the Department of Agriculture are in the grades eligible to OPEDA membership. As of June 30, 1948, the number of employees in Grades P-1 and above was 16,729; in SP-6 and above 1,895; in CAF-7 and above 6,385; an aggregate of 25,009 out of a total appointed personnel of 57,407. The OPEDA membership October 1 of 2,534 therefore is only 10 percent of the total number of departmental employees eligible to membership.

In this connection the list entitled "Officials of the U. S. Department of Agriculture," as revised August 31, 1948, affords an interesting comparison. Eliminating duplications caused by one person filling two positions, there are 90 persons listed. Of these 18, or 20 percent, currently are members of OPEDA in good standing. Thus, the percentage of top-flight officials who are members of OPEDA is twice that of the entire departmental personnel eligible to OPEDA membership.

OPEDA's Objectives

At the October 28 meeting of the Council some thought was given to the specific program of objectives to which OPEDA should give attention in 1949. There had not been time, though, to process and distribute copies of the reports of standing committees or thoroughly to canvass the wide array of possibly desirable objectives, and certain major uncertainties as to future trends and conditions had not then been resolved. Accordingly, final determination of the extent and detail of OPEDA's 1949 program of objectives was left to the Council which is to meet next January.

For 1948 OPEDA had established 8 legislative objectives, set forth in detail in Kneipp letter No. 3, July 12. One of those, to establish salary parity for top-flight scientific work, may be unnecessary. Further study strengthens the view that present law authorizes conformity to that desirable principle. Notwithstanding the Retirement Act of February 28 and the pay raise law, the other 7 legislative objectives continue to have much to commend them in principle and it is probable that they will be major features of the program with which the new Council will launch the 1949 campaign.

The 1948 objectives, other than legislative, as shown in the July 12 letter, also were 8 in number. If the code of ethics now being formulated by the Committee on Professional Standards and Compensation is approved by the Council at its next meeting one of those objectives will

have been accomplished. Experience has demonstrated that the objective of developing OPEDA interest in USDA Clubs created some embarrassing aspects and may well be dropped. It is also evident that cooperation with other Federal employee organizations must be a matter of slow evolution based on mutual understanding and confidence rather than a specific drive by a single organization. Thus only 5 of the 1948 non-legislative objectives have continuing desirability. However, the field of essential action of non-legislative character is wide and affords many other opportunities for worthwhile activity which should be realized.

OPEDA's potential for constructive and effective service to its members would be greatly enlarged, and formulation by the Council of an adequate and comprehensive program of action would be immeasurably aided, if more of OPEDA's members would volunteer suggestions as to the courses of action which most fully would meet their needs and satisfy their desires. Aside from the officers, and members of the Council and the standing committees, less than 1 per centum of the members of OPEDA have recorded opinions or suggestions as to the specific ends toward which OPEDA should work. A wider membership participation in that important field has much to commend it. It is true that members have expressed the view that rather than diffuse its interests and energies over a wide range of purposes, OPEDA should concentrate on what it regarded as the two or three objectives of greatest importance, but that course might not satisfy numerous other members. Expressions of opinion on that point would be valuable guides to future action.

Members of OPEDA, especially those in the field, may be curious as to the range of proposals now exciting the attention and interest of Federal employees generally. For its informational value only this much may be said:

As a result of annual conventions of several of the larger Federal employee unions, expressions of viewpoint by Members of Congress and of the staffs of congressional committees, the letters to newspaper editors by rugged individualists, and the gleanings of fact and grape-vine by the columnists of the four Washington newspapers, a number of goals not within the scope of OPEDA's past programs have now taken tangible form. Merely to illustrate the current range of ideas a number of such possible objectives are listed below.

These are some of the ideas which are now more or less tangible in form:

Better defined and more equitable principles and procedures to govern the requirement and performance of overtime work, and equitable forms of compensation therefor.

Continuation of provisions for annual and sick leave now applicable to the classified service and restoration of the 90-day limit on the carry-over of accrued annual leave.

Payment of unemployment compen-

sation to Federal employees whose services are terminated and who cannot immediately qualify under the Federal Retirement Act.

Payment of death benefits to dependents of Federal employees who die while in active service and before qualification under the Retirement Act.

Inclusion in Departmental personnel councils of representatives of all organizations of employees of Department or agency; plus fair presentation and consideration of valid employee gripes and grievances.

Further amendment of Retirement Act to rectify certain inequities now alleged to exist in relation to women employees with no dependents.

Provision of financial credit services to Federal employees on the security of the deposits to their credit in the retirement fund.

Merit system to be fully safeguarded, strengthened, and extended to include all classes of Federal activities except top-level policy making.

Maximum encouragement of constructive suggestions and of efficient accomplishment, by wider and more general use of awards of merit in the form of commendatory citations, cash payments, advances in salary, advances in grade, preference in promotion to positions of higher responsibility, or in such other ways as may be appropriate or practicable.

Betterment and codification of promotion policies, principles and procedures, intrabureau, interbureau, departmental, interdepartmental, local, regional, and general; so that like action will be taken in like circumstances throughout the entire Federal service; and an employee's opportunities for advancement will not be restricted to the particular bureau, department, or territory in which currently employed.

Improved personnel standards which will assure a Federal personnel that in qualification and competence will meet all requirements for effective performance of the duties and functions of the position.

Efficiency ratings fair and equitable alike to the individual, his or her associate workers, the job, and the superior officers responsible for the effective accomplishment of the project or program.

A Loyalty Program that will completely safeguard the nation against any subversive elements in its administrative structure and eliminate every person therein against whom there is convincing proof of disloyalty; but which will not subject loyal and innocent employees to unfounded charges, the embarrassments inevitably created by such charges, or the subsequent negative effects on their status and careers.

The foregoing list, diverse and extensive as it is, may not adequately cover all current opportunities for improved relationships between the Federal government and its workers, especially its professional workers. If any OPEDA member believes that other items should be added more than

a month remains in which to so apprise the Council. That likewise is true in the event that any member believes that any of the proposals above listed should be adopted by OPEDA as one of its 1949 objectives. If approval is of principle rather than of detailed wording a suggested rewording might be a genuine contribution to the establishment of another forward step in Federal employment practice. It is hoped that neither false modesty nor inertia will deter the presentation of good suggestions, for the glory of OPEDA and the betterment of Federal service.

• **THE 1949 COUNCIL:** Under Article IV of the Constitution the Executive Committee each year determines eligibility and representation on the Council for the ensuing year. Such action was taken by the Executive Committee at its meeting of October 7. As a result 6 of the bureaus will elect 3 voting members and 1 alternate; 2 will elect 2 voting members and 1 alternate; and 9 will elect 1 voting member and 1 alternate. Eleven other bureaus lack the minimum of 10 members requisite to representation on the Council, and the OPEDA members who are now retired have no separate and specific representation; albeit many of them may regard as their representatives the persons their old bureaus elect to the Council. One earnest wish is that the 11 bureaus now with fewer than 10 OPEDA members will double or triple their numbers and thus qualify for Council representation. Whether the retirees will ever desire separate and specific Council representation is conjectural; their geographic distribution is such that agreement on and election of a voting member and an alternate might be difficult. But it seems certain that the 31 voting members and 17 alternates that are to be elected will assure broad representation of all agencies, interests and viewpoints. Nominating committees have been and continue to be busy; ballots for half the OPEDA membership are in course of preparation and distribution; and when the votes are counted in January, OPEDA will be definitely assured of a Council of high caliber and competence.

• **CLASSIFICATION:** Though no authoritative announcements have yet been made, the consensus is that the 81st Congress will give early attention to the revision of the Classification Act, probably as the foundation for such changed pay structure as may be decided on. A while back rumor had it that the House Civil Service Committee contemplated a revision of classification differing from that proposed in the Senate version of the pay raise bill, but in the 81st Congress much of the membership of that committee will be new and the course it may finally approve is not now evident.

OPEDA members may be interested in the results of the Classification questionnaire OPEDA issued this sum-

mer. Considering the importance of the subject the number of returns was somewhat disappointing, yet when the new bills come up for committee consideration OPEDA's reports and oral presentations to the committees will be more representative of its members' views than had the canvass not been made.

Of the 2,320 questionnaires sent to members, 452 were executed and returned. Of these, 62 favored continuation of the current plan; 121 endorsed the plan outlined in the McCarran bill; 255 supported the single-schedule idea advocated by the Civil Service Commission; and 14 stated that their knowledge of the subject did not warrant them in expressing an opinion. However, many saw advantage in creating more specific public understanding, at least by broad classes, of the nature of the duties and services performed by the entire civilian personnel of the Federal Government. Only a small minority apprehended that abolition of the P&S classification adversely would affect their personal status, and most of those thought it would affect them only professionally.

• **OPEDA ELIGIBILITY:** Every so often the OPEDA office regretfully is compelled to return an application for membership and remittance of dues because the grade occupied by the applicant is below the minimum of membership eligibility. But the loss of member and income is only part of the problem. In numerous cases the sponsors or other OPEDA members in the same agency have expressed doubt of the wisdom of the rejection on the ground that to their personal knowledge the official work of the rejected applicant unquestionably involved such professional elements as to qualify them for OPEDA membership. Attention has been called to the fact that for certain positions in grades CAF-5 and CAF-6, the job class standards, or at least the prescribed educational equivalents for experience, clearly establish requirements of a professional nature. Explanations have been made that under certain peculiar conditions and in deference to certain controlling circumstances, salary rates in some unallocated positions or classification grades in other instances, are lower than those which would be commanded by the same types of service under normal departmental practice, so that denial of OPEDA membership to persons in such positions would not be in accord with the true nature of their services. The subject was again considered by the Council at its meeting of October 28. While there was no major inclination to reduce the prevailing minimum standards of eligibility, the consensus was that the Constitution might well be amended to allow membership to persons in positions below the constitutional minima provided the professional character of their work was acceptably established. To that end there was approved for presentation to the January meeting of the Council a proposed amendment to be added to the end of Article III,

as follows: "Provided, that any person who actually is performing services of a technical or professional nature of a type at least equivalent to services performed by persons occupying positions in grades P-1 or SP-6 shall be eligible for membership."

• **OTHER DEPARTMENTS:** Conviction that the OPEDA idea is a good thing for the professional employees of the Department of Agriculture has inspired the belief that like organizations would be equally helpful to the professional employees of other Federal departments and agencies, and that a series of such organizations, each wholly independent and autonomous but coordinating their efforts and programs through a central federation or committee would promote better understanding and appreciation of the part of the professional worker in the machinery of national government. To give the idea currency a list was prepared of 75 men occupying key positions in other departments and agencies of the government. To each of these was sent a rather full letter of explanation accompanied by copies of the OPEDA Constitution, printed program of objectives, fact sheet, chronological history, and July 12 issue of the OPEDA newsletter. In the event of interest fuller explanation and assistance was offered.

Many of the persons whose opinions would be most controlling have been absent from Washington. Then, too, the possibility of drastic changes in the executive establishment may have created doubt as to the wisdom of precipitate action. Furthermore, the success of the proposal would depend on its enthusiastic acceptance by considerable proportions of the professional employees and the wide circulation among them of the informational material would require time. Thus the ultimate success of the idea remains to be determined. It is learned informally, however, that in a number of cases the informational material has been and continues to be circulated and there have been individual expressions of interest. While thus far there has been no wide acceptance of the idea the seed may yet bear fruit. At least, among many men who count in the conduct of the government's professional and scientific work there is now a better knowledge of what the professional people in Agriculture have done and hope hereafter to do and it would not be surprising if eventually the professional people in other departments and agencies would engage in similar programs.

• **REGIONAL CHAPTERS:** When the OPEDA folks centering around Spartanburg, S. C., in early August applied for and were granted a charter to establish a regional chapter, hopes were high that others of the 15 cities or centers listed in the July 12 newsletter as having numbers of OPEDA members sufficient to qualify for a chapter status promptly would follow suit. Thus far those hopes have not

been realized, but with the end of the field season the OPEDA members in other centers may now have time to develop chapter organizations. Meanwhile, in addition to the 16 centers listed in July several others now have the minimum chapter number of 12 or more members each, notably, Fort Worth, Tex., 18; the Twin Cities of St. Paul-Minneapolis, 17; Peoria, Ill., 15; Chicago, Ill., 13; Albany, Calif., 12. The advantages of regional chapters have long been recognized. They are effective mechanisms for harmonizing and expressing group ideas and proposals in ways much more impressive than individual opinions would be. They afford means for teamwork in the promotion of approved action programs; centers through which local newspapers, luncheon clubs, chambers of commerce and other like groups and interests can be apprised of the objectives for which OPEDA stands, the ways in which they contribute to public interest, and the means through which they can be attained. It is not improbable that regional chapters also can serve admirably as centers of social activity and pleasant means of bringing together folks whose acquaintanceship with each other otherwise would be wholly official and formal. A dozen or 20 active regional chapters conceivably could quadruple OPEDA's prestige and effectiveness. May at least that many be in full swing by the close of 1949.

• **OPEDA COMMITTEES:** OPEDA now has five standing committees: Legislation, Informational Research, Retirement, Professional Standards and Compensation, and Other Departments. They have all done earnest and effective work. One basic difficulty is that any single committee following a given objective to its ultimate end is apt to find itself extending into the field of one of the other committees, since legislation enters into almost all programs and the proposals of subject matter committees in most cases require legislation for their fruition. The situation is not a serious one; all of the committees are cooperative and courteous. However, the question tentatively has been raised as to whether the field of committee action could be more effectively defined by three standing committees: one on Legislation, one on Civil Service, and one on the Executive Establishment, these being the three major fields of OPEDA interest and activity.

• **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:** Some of the best items on the editorial pages of some of the country's finest newspapers are not those from editor to reader but from reader to editor. Many of them reflect exceptional mentalities, wide horizons, superlative understanding, ripe judgment, unique experience, mastery of facts. Unquestionably some of OPEDA's readers could write letters of such types for publication in OPEDA. If so, and if they do not, they are derelict to themselves and to their organization. So sharpen the lead pencil or fill the

fountain pen or oil up the family portable and do your part. If you have a good idea tell us about it; perhaps a couple of thousand of your fellow members of OPEDA may want to know about it.

• **"OUR BROTHER'S KEEPER?"** A member of OPEDA is grieved by the filling of a superior position to which he had long aspired, without regard to his many years of specialization in the particular field, and his consistently high efficiency ratings. Another is gravely concerned by report that despite his established seniority and efficiency his position on the separation register marks his early retirement. A third is sincerely convinced that his efficiency ratings have greatly underappraised the true nature and value of his services. It is, of course, possible that their personal interest precludes their objective recognition of all of the controlling circumstances; it is also possible that their views have merit.

The point is that all three, at least by implication, in effect have asked: "Will OPEDA aid me in obtaining full justice?" None of the three manifested any desire that OPEDA go to war in their behalf; rather they seemed mainly to desire OPEDA's moral support, perhaps its review and consideration of their position through a select committee of OPEDA members and a dispassionate analysis and summary of the pros and cons; possibly consultation with the responsible officers of their particular bureaus.

There is nothing in OPEDA's Constitution or unwritten policy or past history that would sanction affirmative action in these and like cases. Advice to that effect inspired the at least implied query: "Then what do I get out of OPEDA membership?"

The cases cited were those that attained specific expression. Scores of other members of OPEDA may entertain like thoughts, as yet unexpressed. Many who are potential members of OPEDA may be withholding membership because of uncertainty as to the degree to which they could count on the moral or tangible support of the organization should an issue arise which involved their personal interest and welfare.

A reasonably specific definition of the spirit, purpose and scope of OPEDA in its relation to its individual members in matters which affect their personal interest would seem to be highly desirable. To what extent, if any, should it recognize a community of interest, a principle of "all for one, one for all?" Specifically, if issues arise between a member and his superiors, might there be circumstances in which OPEDA could or should display a direct interest in the case?

• **OVERTIME PAY:** During the past several months numerous conferences and hearings have been held by the Interdepartmental Committee on Overtime Pay of Certain Inspectional Personnel, which is comprised of representatives of the Civil Service Com-

mission, Budget Bureau, Commerce Department, Treasury Department, Justice Department, Agriculture Department, U. S. Public Health Service, U. S. Coast Guard and Federal Communications Commission. Horace S. Dean of E&PQ represents Agriculture on the committee. The studies and hearings have disclosed variations and vagaries of overtime practice that could lead to a comprehensive review and adjustment of the entire field of federal overtime policy and pay.

The testimony of different witnesses collectively suggests that there are five basic considerations which justify overtime rates of pay higher than the normal rates, viz: (1) to spread available work opportunity among the maximum number of available workers; (2) to pay for additional hours of service rendered over and above those on which base pay is computed; (3) to offset the difficulties, discomforts, and greater costs of transportation, meal and other services during off-hour periods; (4) to further compensate the employee for the sacrifice of his or her normal domestic or cultural regimen; and (5) to discourage illogical, untimely and unreasonable demands for off-hour service inspired by motives of private benefit and advantage rather than true public interest.

The Federal employees who perform overtime work seem to fall into three broad classes, i.e. (1) those who work overtime without claim or allowance of payment or compensatory time, merely to maintain the standards of service they deem desirable; (2) those who serve without dissent under the overtime provisions of the Federal Employee Pay Act, even though above certain salary levels the hourly overtime rate becomes a progressively diminishing fraction of the normal hourly rate; and (3) those who enjoy higher levels of overtime pay under special laws. There was some question as to the logic and equity of these variations.

The subject became an active issue mainly because the Customs Act of 1911 requires shippers to pay special overtime rates to Customs Inspectors for services rendered during other than regular hours. The shippers are endeavoring to have such charges abolished, or at least limited to the scales set forth in the Federal Pay Act. The representatives of the Federal employees operating under the special acts contend that uniformity in overtime pay provisions should be attained by raising all overtime compensation to the high levels of the 1911 act.

• **GRIPE SESSIONS:** The Rural Electrification Administration has adopted a new and interesting principle of employee relations. Its regional conferences at Butte, Roanoke and Kansas City last June featured a Gripe Session in which attending members were not only privileged but encouraged to voice all conditions which they deemed unsatisfactory. Chairmen presided, resolutions were debated and adopted, min-

utes were kept, results were processed and widely distributed. Now the entire Department and probably the Budget Bureau, the Comptroller General, the Civil Service Commission and other segments of the governmental structure are specifically aware of at least some of the conditions which impair efficiency and morale. It will be interesting to note whether other bureaus of the Department adopt a similar procedure as standard practice. Its value as an escape valve for the relief of tensions seems obvious. Meanwhile, OPEDA might perhaps be used by its members in a somewhat similar capacity; not as a contentious critic of conditions which merit correction but more as a friend of the court amicably directing attention to reported causes of dissatisfaction and means suggested for their alleviation.

• **FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICE:** On November 10, representatives of the several Federal employee organizations conferred with Wesley McCune, Executive Assistant to the Secretary, on procedure for carrying out the recent executive order concerning fair employment practices.

Referring to established departmental policy, as set forth in Personnel Circular No. 175, October 22, 1947, McCune felt it would be sensible to combine the employment practice policy with the existing procedure rather than to establish new machinery for carrying out the new executive order. However, to protect all rights, in cases of alleged discrimination or violation of fair employment practice, provision should be made for exercise by any party to a complaint of three rights not specifically provided in the current appeals procedure, to wit:

1. A representative of his own selection present at the hearing to assist him with his appeal or defense. (This representative will be in addition to the board members.)

2. Verbatim transcript of all testimony shall be made available to the complainant.

3. Cross-examination by any party or his representative of any person testifying before the board.

Changes in phraseology were proposed and in part adopted. In principle the proposals met with general approval by all of the employee representatives participating in the conference.

Problems of a Government Worker

When a good suit of clothes could be bought for \$40, a good pair of shoes for \$7.50, a good beefsteak for 45 cents per pound, the now current average number of dollars per Fed-

eral employee per year would have been a good salary. But now a suit of the same quality costs \$60, a pair of shoes of the same quality \$12.50, a steak of the same quality \$1 per pound.

When good hotels were willing to rent their least expensive rooms for \$2 to \$3 per night; when a bellhop manifested real appreciation of a two-bit tip; when a suit could be pressed for 50 cents or cleaned for \$1; when a week's laundry would cost perhaps \$2, and good dinners were obtainable for \$1 to \$1.50, an allowance of \$6 per diem in lieu of subsistence reasonably covered actual expenditures. But now hotel rooms at less than \$4 per day leave much to be desired, a 25-cent tip is more apt to inspire a dirty look than a smile, pressing a suit costs 75 cents to \$1 and cleaning one \$1.25 to \$1.50, the laundry ticket is apt to read about \$3.25, and the dinner prices range from \$1.50 to \$2.50.

When a good automobile could be bought for \$1,200 and a good grade of gasoline for 20 cents per gallon, an allowance of 6 cents per mile for the use of a privately owned automobile for official purposes was a fair, though no generous compensation. But now an auto of the same quality and condition costs in excess of \$2,000 and gas, including higher State and Federal taxes, costs in excess of 25 cents per gallon.

Not because of personal desires but because their jobs require it, employees are transferred from one headquarters point to another. Their personal travel expenses are paid and within certain limits the costs of transferring their household effects are paid. But if they have a wife and children or other dependents, or household effects other than those allowable under travel regulations, such additional costs of transfer must be met from their own funds; and today such costs are markedly higher than in earlier years.

In the course of official duty one incurs a physical injury that results in a long period of total disability. Medical and hospital expenses will be taken care of, but after annual and sick leave have been exhausted, the maximum receivable as a disability allowance is now \$116.67 per month or \$1,400 per year; perhaps only one-third or one-fourth of normal salary. Just how to maintain a home and family on so limited a proportion of anticipated income, without exhausting all savings and other resources, is a problem of the first magnitude.

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